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ST. PAUL'S MYSTICISM

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This important article illustrates a definite current in New Testament study. We see New Testament characters through the atmosphere of their actual historical relations. That they do not suffer in our own estimation from this better understanding is a tribute to their supremacy. Of all New Testament writers, Paul is both the greatest and the most in need of retranslation, but we shall never understand Paul until we see him as he really was, not as he has been sometimes misrepresented by his interpreters.

"To be great is to be misunderstood." One of the most illustrious instances of the truth of Emerson's famous generalization is afforded by the treatment of St. Paul's teaching throughout Christian history. From the days of the sharp controversy at Antioch and the Council at Jerusalem; from the days of his persecution for "perverting the faith of the fathers"; through the times of Augustine and the Schoolmen and the Reformers; down almost to our century, St. Paul has suffered the misfortune of being misunderstood and misinterpreted. Whether he has suffered the more in the house of his friends or at the gates of his enemies is sometimes difficult to determine. Paraphrasing his own remark, it might truly be said: Unto this day, whensoever Paul has been read a veil hath lain upon the heart of the reader. Only within recent years, in the light of a broader understanding of his times and a juster and more sympathetic appreciation for the man himself, has the veil in some measure been lifted. He has been treated as a systematic theologian; but systematic theologian he never was. He has been treated as a hidebound

legalist; but hidebound legalist he never was. He has been accused of adulterating the pure stream of Christian teaching with an alien element; but this is far more true of those who narrowed and wrested his meaning, and set up his doctrine as the test of orthodoxy without first setting themselves to understand the man who taught the doctrine.

The numerous juridical theories of the atonement and of justification which occupied the attention of the mediaeval schools and gave rise to the elder theologies of Protestantism, though masking under St. Paul's terminology, were really due to ignorance of the full meaning of his terms. They were also due to the perverse habit of isolating single passages, or even single words, of the Epistles, and then adroitly balancing his whole view and presentation of Christianity upon some such minute points. We are now coming to a more adequate acquaintance with his times, with the life and thought of the later Hellenistic period, to which whole generations of our scholastic forbears have been utterly oblivious, their gaze intently fixed upon the classic age preceding.

We are coming to understand St. Paul's terms. The verse-method of reading Scripture is now happily forever done away with. And we have learned to treat the Epistles as literature, as letters; no longer as a systematized series of "divinity lectures," but as a whole, and as the remaining body of documents of a movement and of a man. We are coming thus to view his teaching in its entirety, so far as we may, and to understand one passage by another. We are coming to realize, for instance, that his representation theory expressed in the phrases "Second Adam," "for us" is meaningless apart from the phrases "in Christ," "Christ in you"; that to retain one set of terms while letting go the other is to secure but a distorted fragment of his meaning. And the latter terms are mystical.

It is possible that the misunderstanding of St. Paul has been due in part to the circumstances of his prominence in the active work of founding and organizing the nascent gentile church. Ordinarily, the mystic is a recluse, and his spirit leaves the cloister to enter the world of men only through a book, embodied in a phraseology destined to win the audience of the few rare souls who discern in him one of their own kindred and accept at once his light and his guidance. But St. Paul was no cloistered spirit. Ever out in the arena of public activity; ever bent on the realization of his prodigious missionary ideal, the preaching of the gospel to every creature; bearing the burden of the care of all the churches; planting, watering, organizing, establishing—he was a master of men, a world-traveler, a citizen of the Empire,

a friend of soldiers and merchants and craftsmen. Comparable to him in this respect is that other exceptional mystic, Tauler—the preacher of his day, the charity-administrator, the organizer and executor of great practical undertakings. But Tauler, making public his mysticism, was tried for heresy at the bar of the recognized representatives of Paulinism; for by the irony of history it had come about that Paul, teaching broadcast his mystical doctrines, had been mistaken for a theologian and set up to judge men's faith—*minus* his mysticism. *Damnanti quod non intelligunt*. St. Paul's prestige as the founder of gentile Christianity overshadowed and encumbered the true prestige of his interpretation of Christ. It was an artificial position he held for centuries, given him without sufficient perception or discrimination on the part of his admirers. No one guessed his actual position, nor its magnitude. His historical prominence made him liable to a wholesale acceptance of his teaching, crudely conceived and misinterpreted on the part of those who undertook to set it forth. No one suspected him of mysticism, save for a few souls scattered here and there through the centuries, mystics themselves. For he had neglected to register and label himself as such when he entered the lists of Christian history—he lacked the air of a mystic. He lacked what most mystics possess in a greater or lesser degree, an abundance of poetic feeling and imagination. Even such poetic figures as he did venture to adopt suffered from the literalizing of his disciples. It was difficult to recognize a mystic in one who had been reared on rabbinism and

the Law, a mystic speaking in a realistic language.

But even so, it would seem that the Catholic church has not so greatly misunderstood St. Paul as have the later Christian bodies, whose theology, in no small measure, has been mediated through Reformation channels. And this for the simple reason that mysticism is more welcome and finds a more congenial soil in Catholicism than in the Protestant sects. The ideal of Catholicism has ever been, and still is, in a generic way, other-worldly. And St. Paul is a mystic, *par excellence*, and his Christianity is world-renouncing.

I

It may be well, first of all, to sketch Paul's antecedents, the factors in his early life which went to the shaping of his maturer mind.

a) *Pharisaism*.—To his dying day St. Paul claimed to be a Pharisee, of the strictest sect of his nation; "a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee"! This is important. To know a man well we ought really to know his grandfathers. In St. Paul's case this is out of the question. However, we do know that his training was Pharisaic; that it was in the school to which the deeper religious minds of late Judaism turned in the stress of the times. And if there were representatives of this school who merited our Lord's fiercest denunciations, there were other representatives who did not. Of Rabbi Hillel, the grandfather of Paul's own teacher, Gamaliel, it was said that his kindness and spiritual temper "brought men close under the wings of the Shekinah." Gamaliel was the teacher in whom the longings

for personal communion with God as a release from—or at least compensation for—the burden of legalism found expression. His was the prayer which Augustine echoed, "O Lord, grant that I may do thy will as if it were my will; so that thou mightest do my will as if it were thy will" (Campbell, *Paul the Mystic*, p. 73). Exactly what mystical tendencies Pharisaism represented we cannot determine. However, a recent writer (J. Abelson, *Hibbert Journal*, 1912) has pointed out numerous instances of mystical thought in the rabbinites.

b) *Legalism*.—But the prevailing tendency and *raison d'être* of Pharisaism was legalism. The rock upon which the true human life was to be built, the life of righteousness, was the Law of Moses. The noblest study to which the mind of man could devote itself was the study of the Law. The highest service to mankind, as to God, in which one could engage himself was the interpretation of the Law, and the definition of the minutest human duties in the light of that Law. The student in the Pharisaic schools was required to master, not only the Law itself, but also the vast body of ever-accumulating case-law, precedents in interpretation and application, which finally resulted in the Mishna and the Talmuds. This naturally formed the curriculum of Gamaliel's school, which St. Paul attended in Jerusalem. Also it represented the atmosphere and the ideal of whatever learning was to be found in the home in Tarsus, and in the Jewish school there, if such he had attended. Legalism was consequently not so much a distinct element in the early life of Paul; it was

the material out of which the whole fabric of his early life was made; from which he later broke, but which he never quite put away. The Law was the "schoolmaster" bringing him, by what tedious and bitter way we can only surmise from Romans, chap. 7, to Christ. We may mention legalism, not because it contributed to his final character its most important constituent, but in order to bear in mind what he started from.

c) *Hellenistic ideas*.—It is of the utmost importance that Paul was born a Jew of the Diaspora, and nowhere else than in Tarsus of Cilicia in Asia. What would have been the consequence had his birthplace been Jerusalem or Galilee or Alexandria are pleasing speculations. But by birth a Jew of Cilicia, with sufficient opportunity for contact with the ideas of the world as it lived and thought in his age; with the philosophical tendencies of the times, when every civilian knew some philosophy, and prided himself on his Stoicism, his Epicureanism, or his relations to the Academics or Peripatetics; with the religious tendencies of the age, when, in the decadence of the old state and city religions, new faiths, almost all of a type, were being introduced yearly by zealous propagandists; all this was decidedly important and determinative for the Paul who was to be. Although we can hardly look for any direct, conscious influence of one or another of the religions and philosophies of the day upon young Saul in Tarsus (his Jewish home and rearing being sufficient bulwark against these), yet we can hardly fail to see the influence of the spirit of the times, the general atmosphere in which

men lived, to which all of these religions and philosophies contributed. *How* this indirect influence came about and what effect it had we shall try to point out later.

d) *Eschatology*.—Along with the majority of the devout Jews of his time, especially among the Pharisees, Paul was looking for the establishment of the messianic kingdom. This hope took many different forms among different believers. There was probably no common, easily defined, messianic hope; each faithful man drew it for himself and painted it with his own favorite colors, only conforming to the general outlines sketched in the Psalter and Prophets. What particular view Paul held we cannot ascertain. But from what he says of Christ being "the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth. . . . Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down)" (Rom. 10:4, 6), we can judge that his eschatology was of that high transcendental type which looked for the coming of the divine, heavenly Messiah, to set up the old theocratic kingdom with its old regal glories restored, and new divine glories added. This was probably the distinctively Pharisaic eschatology; witness the Psalms of Solomon and the "Pharisaic" section of the Book of Enoch. And it was this conception of the Messiah which was necessarily and in a vital way, as Dr. J. Weiss pointed out, the requisite and indispensable antecedent to his conversion. We cannot understand how the appearance of the risen Jesus to Saul the Pharisee could have had any great religious effect upon him, such as it had, unless it was the One

whom he recognized as the heavenly, divine Messiah of his hopes and prayers who was there and thus identifying himself with "Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest."

e) *His religiousness*.—How can we characterize St. Paul's reaction to these elements in his environment and early thought? What was his religious character? We can say no less than this: that he took his ideas and his faith in deadly earnest; religion was a matter of life and death—the life or death of the *spirit*, which was more than the destruction or survival of the body; and the struggle for life was not less intense than souls in a hundred ages have made it. "If salvation came by the Law," Paul certainly would have won salvation. What Luther said in his famous remark, "If ever a monk got to heaven by monkery . . . , " Paul might have said, "If ever a Jew got to heaven by the Law, I was that Jew." It was a teaching of certain of the rabbis that the kingdom of Heaven and God's Messiah were to come so soon as all Jewry should keep the Law perfectly from one Sabbath till the next. This may have been the point of Paul's quotation from Deuteronomy, "Who shall ascend into heaven?" adding, "That is, to bring Christ down." Certainly, he lacked no spur, if one were needed, to keeping the Law with all his might. But he was dissatisfied. He did not find what he wanted. What he wanted was *redemption*—release from the power of the desire to sin. His religiousness was the search, for himself, of God and righteousness; it was *not* legalism, but the struggle of a strong soul caught in the toils of legalism, struggling for free-

dom. The pernicious thing about "legalism" is its satisfied resting in the obedience to statutory requirements. But St. Paul was dissatisfied, restless—his strong soul was bent upon finding first-hand security against sin and the flesh. It was not the amiable self-satisfaction of the legalist—of the scribes and Pharisees of the Gospels—nor was it the weak morbidness of the recluse that wrung from him the cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). It was the cry of a soul mighty in its spiritual grasp, brave, seriously determined to know the truth of life, to find God and his righteousness. Such, so far as we know them, are all the great heroes of mysticism; the weak, the frivolous, the self-contented never enter within its portals. Only they that seek shall find; only the strong can bear "the burden of the vision from the Lord."

f) *Apocalyptic experiences*.—Even a brief characterization of St. Paul's mind ought not to leave out mention of his "revelations." Aside from his experience on Damascus road, there were other visions of Christ, angelic visitations, and divine messages to him at various times. Praying in the temple at Jerusalem, he fell into a trance and saw Christ speaking to him (Acts 22: 17 f.); on another occasion, he ascended ("whether in the body or out of the body," he wist not) into the Third Heaven, into Paradise, and heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter" (II Cor., chap. 12). He possessed the common "gift of tongues." What sort of a temperament was demanded for these experiences?

What must have been his temperament in childhood and youth? Only the expert psychologist, perhaps, can give us an answer; but at least it would seem that he must have been *open* on that side. His temperament must have been one of some susceptibility to such things. And he must have practiced these experiences, to whatever extent they are capable of practice. At any rate, he never boasts of them; they were a part of his God-given equipment for the carrying out of his mission, that was all. "There are powers of acquiring knowledge which are an unintelligible mystery to those who have not possessed and exercised them," says one authority; "and this is a case in which possession implies exercise, and only exists in virtue of being exercised" (Professor Ramsay, *Pauline Studies*, p. 9).

II

The crisis of St. Paul's life came with his conversion. Like many conversions, it had "outward and visible signs" as well as an "inward and spiritual grace." The blinding light, the fall to the earth, the "scales" of blindness on his eyes—these were the outward and visible signs of the sudden inward change—the mental earthquake he endured. But the "grace" was that which for long had been operating in his mind and heart, and which wrought in him during the period of retirement after his conversion. This was a time of adjustment, even if (as is probable) a time of mental warfare—a period of winning peace through struggle, struggle of the new self over the old self, the new ideas over the old. It was the final birth of his higher soul, for which his whole

nature had groaned in expectancy. He emerged from this period a new, twice-born man, with a new faith, a new mind, a new life. If St. Paul bridged, historically, the transition from legalism to later Christianity, he bridged it first in *himself*. Thus prepared, he performed a service for Christianity which places him forever next to our Lord as the master of Christian history. He bridged the gulf between eschatology and Catholicism, between Mark, chap. 13, and John, chap. 1, and he did this because he *lived* the transition in his own mind and life. He was able to do this, not because he was a rational theologian or a logician (however skilled his logic from a rabbinic standpoint), but because he was a mystic. The great contradictions could be bound together and kept from mutual destruction precisely by virtue of a preponderance of intuitive over logical modes of thinking—by virtue of his mysticism. The world's apostles of pure reason would have fallen flat in the effort had they undertaken St. Paul's task.

St. Paul emerged from this experience and the succeeding retirement with a new faith. Its center was his belief in union with the spiritual Christ. All his other doctrines hinge on that. It was not mere "acceptance of Christ," "belief in Christ," but a *life* in Christ, a life "hid with Christ in God," the life of Christ *in him* through the Spirit. The personal, psychological medium of this was "faith," as he calls it. The significance of all that Christ was in his human life comes to him in this way, then: If he sees a sacrificial meaning in His death—and he *must* see some meaning in the *death* of the heavenly Messiah;

the Messiah's death could not remain insignificant to him—then the cross also means sacrifice for him, personally, renunciation, dying his Lord's death, his own dying *in* his Lord's death; and the resurrection of his Lord was *his* resurrection—he must “daily” die and rise, for he has already, potentially and really, died and risen in the Messiah's death and resurrection. This is the sense of Professor Gardner's remark that “the death and resurrection of Christ were not, to St. Paul, so much events in history as facts of his own spiritual experience” (Dr. Percy Gardner, *The Religious Experience of St. Paul*). Or, as Dr. Du Bose says (*Gospel According to St. Paul*, p. 145), “We best . . . understand our Lord's death and resurrection when we interpret it in terms of what needs to take place in ourselves in the completing and completeness of our stand and attitude against sin and for God and his holiness and righteousness.” St. Paul was not, apparently, interested in the details of our Lord's life and death; unlike St. John, e.g., he attached no symbolic value to the water and blood from Jesus' side. If he had thought of the crucifixion as a judicial act in history, merely, he would have been interested in its details; but for him it took on more the aspect of a transaction in the spirit. Of course, it was performed in time and at a definite place. But its meaning, its importance, was out in the eternal. This comes out in the passage where he speaks of Christ “disarming the principalities and powers, exposing and triumphing over them in the cross.” This reflects “a cosmic rather than a forensic view of the work of Christ” (Dr. Moffat,

Paul and Paulinism, p. 63), and indicates the central truth on which all the lines of Paul's thought converge, namely, that the relation between Christ and men begins in the Spirit and in faith.

“What is Christianity but the living oneness of Christians with Christ and with one another in Christ?” “We shall live with him only as we have died with him,” and his death was our death (Dr. Du Bose, *Soteriology of the New Testament*, pp. 379, 382). This is a far remove from the later theologies of substitution and vicarious punishment; it is even far from identical with the other interpretations of the death of Christ, common in the first century and contemporary with St. Paul, which followed more closely along the lines suggested by the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Du Bose says (*op. cit.*, p. 323):

If the gift of salvation by Christ consisted in his bearing the guilt of past sins, this could be laid upon him only by imputation; he could have died for us only vicariously, substitutionarily, or representatively. If it consisted in his breaking the power and abolishing the fact of present sin, he did and does this by being in himself and in us the power of God unto sinlessness and holiness, and his death is not a death instead of ours, but is in a very real sense our death. It is our death passively in, and actively from, all that in us from which we need to be saved; our death in the flesh of sin and from the flesh of sin.”

This was the crux and heart, the living, pulsating heart, of St. Paul's mysticism. The baptism into the death and resurrection of the Lord is valueless unless the believer lives a dying-rising life. Oneness with Christ means fellowship in his sufferings and resurrection. It is the symbol of the believer's new life;

and the sacrament of an *unio mystica* with Christ which bordered on self-identification. He who could rejoice "to fill up on his part that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh" (Col. 1:24); who bore about in his body the stigmata of the Lord; who could seek "to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death, so that if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10 f.); he it was who could say, "to me to live is Christ, to die is gain"; "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This was salvation, redemption: personal death and resurrection in Christ; not through a forensic procedure of laying upon Christ the burden of humanity's sin, though it was *sin* that brought Christ to the cross, but a life sharing Christ's life, partaking of his sufferings and a sharer in his death—and in his resurrection; not legalism, but a mystical experience.

III

Where did St. Paul get the *terms* in which he expresses the meaning Christ has for him in this experience?

The air of the gentile world was more or less permeated with the thought of the mystery-religions. The mysteries were zealously preached in public—not, of course, the secrets known only to the initiate, but the value of what they had to offer to human need. Only so could they have increased in numbers so rapidly as they did. We have some evidence of propagandizing as far back as the time of Plato, who ridicules (*Republic* 364a) the vendors of wisdom and

immortality, knocking and crying their wares at the doors of the well-to-do. The number of these cults coming from the East almost yearly must have aroused rivalry between them. And we can hardly imagine St. Paul, traveling Asia Minor and Greece, getting about without meeting propagandists. Naturally, such a likelihood does not make probable any direct influence of the mysteries upon the content of Paul's faith; he was too much a Jew—above all too much a Christian—to be thus directly influenced. The years in Arabia and Syria had crystallized his belief long before he set foot upon Asia and Greece as a missionary. Farther back in his career we can see the possible point of contact with the terms and beliefs of mystery-religion. For he was born and for a while lived in Cilician Tarsus, on the very route of the Persian and Assyrian cults in their journeying westward. And the cults had been in vogue for long enough a time to have more or less saturated the thought of that region; possibly no one mystery in particular, for they were all so similar in general principles of belief that a number of them could simultaneously contribute to affecting the thought and language of the place, familiarizing the common man with their principles, without predisposing him to any one in particular, or compelling him to suppose that the use of language appropriated by the mysteries was really placing him under intellectual obligations to this or that cult. The mysteries were the personal religion of the better classes, of the thoughtful and earnest religious minds of the time. Their general likenesses we can briefly summarize:

a) A doctrine of union with the god of the mystery, particularly union (identification) with him in the great events of his mythical life—(birth), sorrows, death, revivification—celebrated symbolically in the rites of the mystery. Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Dionysius, Mithras, Isis, all had these rites of union. In the Hermetic writings, e.g., the *mystes* says: "Thou art I and I am thee; thy name is mine and mine thine; for I am thine image," etc. (ὅτι γὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ ἐγὼ εἰμι · τὸ δὲ ὄνομα ἐμὸν καὶ τὸ ἐμὸν ζόν · ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι τὸ εἰδωλόν σου κτλ; cf. Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, p. 97). And one of the papyri gives: "Thou art I and I thee; whatsoever I say must come to pass—for thy name I have as a talisman upon my heart" (ὅτι γὰρ εἰ ἐγὼ καὶ ἐγὼ εἰμι · ὃ ἐὰν εἴπω δεῖ γενέσθαι—τὸ γὰρ ὄνομά σου ἔχω φυλακτήριον ἐν καρδίᾳ τῇ ἐμῇ). (The degeneracy of such rites as these into magic speaks for their popularity.)

b) A death-baptism of purification from sin and dedication to (and union with) the god. This was a ritualistic act, sometimes performed in blood, as in the case of the mystery of Mithras, where a bull was slain and the blood poured over the neophyte.

c) The impartation of hidden wisdom, the knowledge of which gained for the *mystae* immortality after death and communion with the spiritual, angelic, divine world now.

These general outlines of belief must have been largely the common property of all religious thinking men of the times. So alike were the various mysteries that one loyal votary could make his goddess say:

I am nature, mother of all things, mistress of all elements, the first-born of the

ages, greatest of the gods. . . . My sole deity, under many forms, with various rites, under different names, is adored by the whole world. The Phrygians, eldest of races, call me the mother-goddess of Pessinus; the Athenians, born from the soil, Cecropian Minerva; . . . the Eleusinians, the ancient deity Demeter. . . . But those first lighted by the rising sun, the Ethiopians, the Aarii, and the Egyptians, mighty in ancient lore, honor me with my peculiar rites and call me by my true name, Queen Isis [Apuleius *Metamorphoses* xi. 5; cf. the whole very interesting passage, given, e.g., in Gardner, *Religious Experience of St. Paul*, p. 93].

It is to be noted now that these fundamental ideas of the mysteries were principles of mystical belief. Their foundation-principle was union with the Divine. It was mysticism nascent in rites; rites which, as a rule, always precede theology.

If we can look at all to any influence of Greek thought upon St. Paul; if we think of him as a real man living among men in the Hellenistic world; possibly we can see here, then, in the permeation of Greco-Roman thought with the principles of the old and the new mysteries, the source whence Paul, the anti-Judaistic Christian Hellenist-Jew, derived suggestions which materially aided him in expressing his conception of Christ and of his relation to Christ.

The mysteries, Attic, Orphic, etc., were the precursors of mysticism in philosophy and theology. Even the most wildly corybantic were in some degree the precursors of, and on the line of development which resulted in, neo-Platonism and the mystical theology of the Catholic church. Just as tribal rites were precursory to organized religion—

if we allow any line of relation between the sacrificial rites of old shepherds in Syria and Egypt and the great act of worship of the church, the Eucharist, we must also allow a line of relation between the principles of Dionysiac and Orphic religion and the higher faith of mystical saints and devotees. St. Paul stands midway in this development. Educated in the rites and theology of a realistic religion, he became the apostle of a gospel of mystical union with his Savior. He was not a full-fledged mystic. The transition from Judaism and the Law to Christianity and Christ, from eschatology to mysticism, was so great that he made no considerable positive advance in the purely mystical direction. But his tendency was that way, the direction of his mind. His greatness was in bridging the gulf, not in advancing after the gulf was bridged. It is inconceivable that he should have reached the heights and depths of Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Bernard, or the Victorines, or of Eckhart and Tauler. But they all built upon his foundation, or, to retain our former figure, they advanced upon the side to which, historically, St. Paul had flung the bridge. The eschatological first-faith of the early Jerusalem community would have been barren soil indeed for mysticism. Supposing that by some hidden possibility this particular form of Christianity had become the world-religion, the fourth- or fifth-century Dionysius would have remained a neo-Platonist; and the church calendar would have known no Clement, saint, of Alexandria. Of course, there was the Fourth Gospel; but that was written some years later

than Paul's period of teaching, and within the territory of the Pauline gospel field. At the least, its conception of our Lord, if not dependent on St. Paul (cf. Col., chap. 1, etc.), was no *innovation* there—an advance, possibly, upon St. Paul; but certainly upon the lines of St. Paul's own advance. St. Paul's gospel shades the sharp chiaroscuro apparent in the New Testament, for example, in the contrast between the Fourth Gospel and the Epistle of St. James.

St. Paul not only extended Christianity to the gentile world, and gave it a deeper, more timeless meaning, but he also assured forever the rights of mysticism in the church. If we find it coming out ever and anon in Christian history, it is because St. Paul had guaranteed its rights of life.

IV

To call St. Paul a "theologian" is half wrong. His theology is not a rational deduction from a set of intellectual hypotheses, not a system of inferences, as were the theologies of Thomas and of Calvin, for example; but solely an effort to represent, in what terms he best could, the meaning of his own private spiritual experience and the experience of his contemporaries. The theologian is he who from given data of revelation, church-dogmas, common-sense, and spiritual learning deducts and constructs a systematic theory of religion. St. Paul had no church-dogmas before him; his Scriptures were confined to the Old Testament (and these he reinterpreted in the light of his own new faith); his "revelation" was not yet in writing—he was writing it down,

here and there, in occasional letters to his converts—his revelation was in his own experience, the revelations vouchsafed him in his inner life. Surely, to represent him as a theologian, as the prototype of Augustine and the Schoolmen and Reformers, is incorrect. No Schoolman of the sixth or thirteenth or sixteenth century ever ventured to found a theology and state it in the terms of personal experience. Who else ever claimed "We have the mind of Christ" as the sufficient authentication of his position?

It may be asked: How could St. Paul, if a mystic, and gifted with true mystical insight, still cling so tenaciously to the old terms of anthropomorphism, the legalist view of God, and speak of "God's wrath," of justification from the penalty of sin? But I hold that his life and thought were a great transition from legalism to mysticism; that he could, in consequence, never let go the one nor fully apprehend the other; that the traditional view of God and religion which he had inherited remained in part with him even after he had found a newer, truer view; and their contradictions he never reconciled, but let remain side by side in the make-up of his enormously complex, paradoxical mind. It would illustrate this if we could say that God, the Father of our Lord, remained to his mind in the old character of Lawgiver and Judge, and that Jesus, his new Lord Christ, was his heart's real deity; only, the illustration would be untrue to fact in too many particulars. (Marcion was one of St. Paul's most fatal misinterpreters!) Jesus and the Father are too nearly related, too closely bound up in nature and

character, in St. Paul's thinking, to allow any such sweeping distinction. But we can see St. Paul, not indeed revolting from the view of God which the Law had furnished him, but still, nevertheless, seeking and finding in Christ, as distinct from the Father, all that the depths of his soul cried out for. Some of the later mystics turned more to God than to Christ—to retain our hypothetical distinction; to God as the One, the Ineffable, the Increate, the Nameless, the All, the Nothing—to the neglect of the person of Christ in their devotion. But their "One," "Ineffable," "Nameless," was not the God of the Law; he was more the God of neo-Platonism. St. Paul, on the other hand, found in *Christ* what his soul sought—rest, peace, strength, righteousness, redemption, salvation, union with God and in God. In this he was nearer to those other mystics for whom he set the example—Suso, e.g., and his wooing of Divine Wisdom; St. Bernard and the Mystical Bridegroom; St. Thomas of Kempen; St. Theresa; St. John of the Cross; and the more churchly mystics who never lost sight of the *personality* of God and of Christ. If another sweeping generalization will be allowed, St. Paul was the father of Western, rather than of Eastern, mysticism.

But still, he does use the word "justification" as if it meant all that later logicians made the word to mean! However, does he not really mean by it one aspect of "sanctification," as theology distinguishes between the two? In Romans it is stated for the benefit of Jewish readers in Rome. But first, it is the statement of the case to his own self, for his own benefit, from the one

side of his nature which knew the facts of his experience to that other, still half-legalistic, side, a sort of intellectual satisfaction. For St. Paul had that multitudinous kind of mind, a complex embracing elements which, if divided up, would have sufficed for half a dozen other men. However, these half-dozen characters lived side by side in him. Hence, in the "Justification theology," only one side of the truth is stated, one expression of the truth, good for the time and occasion; good also permanently, as expressing a permanent aspect of the truth. The truth remains, the whole truth; its expression in legalistic terminology was once valuable, for certain readers, for St. Paul himself; once more valuable than it is today. We *know* that there is more in the death and resurrection of our Lord than a self-victimizing to propitiate an offended and exacting Deity; we *know* that to speak of the effect of his death upon us and in us as a matter of "justification" alone is so inadequately to represent it as to verge upon misrepresentation. It is something more vital, deeper; it changes us, makes us over—gives us a new mind and heart, a new vision, and a new love. And St. Paul knew this too and elsewhere voices it. But being a man capable of tremendous inconsistencies without losing sight of his chief and highest aim, he never gives himself up wholly to his mystical—nor to his legalistic—tendencies. His effort to "become all things to all men" compelled him never to neglect an opportunity for making, in a modified way, his gospel acceptable to the understandings of all men. Not that he compromised his gospel; rather, he accommodated

the language of its expression to suit his hearers. In the Areopagus he quotes Aratus and attempts the philosophy of religion; from the steps of the Castle of Antonia he is only a Pharisee. To the Gnostics of Colosse and Laodicea he is almost a Gnostic; to the Jews in Rome he is once more a Jew. And none of these various characters struck him as contradictory to his main purpose; rather, they were diplomatic, and he felt called to play each several part to the limit of his ability. And, as a sincere man, he had to state the gospel to the satisfaction of himself in the character which was, at the time, uppermost in him. How differently have Paul's disciples construed this, from Marcion on! And yet no one can but admit that it was a principle involving some amount of danger!

But the most vital statement of his gospel, the one which lay nearest to the back of all his varied utterances, is the mystical. All of the others take their perspective in relation to this. If we are justified in the death of Christ, it is because we are one with him, we are *in* him, we are *he* (for he is in us, our new self) (cf. "eine lokal Sichbefinden," Deissmann), and have died to sin and are new men in his resurrection. "He that is dead is justified." If Christ died to overcome death, then his death actually overcomes death only as we are in Christ and rise with and in him. If Christ died to appease God's wrath against us, that has its efficacy because *we* died (in him) to appease the wrath against us. If he died to conquer the invisible tyrants of the earth—thrones, principalities, powers—our release from them and victory over them is in our

identification with him. To the Gnostic, to the Jew, to the Hellenistic *μύστης*, however variously the gospel was presented to them, the key, the fact that gave to each representation its value and meaning, was that Christ and the believer were subtly united and identified: to the Jew, under the figure of a legal proceeding, a trial, a plea, a condemnation, and a following acquittal or justification won by the Advocate, Christ, who gives satisfaction and bonds for the defendant in his death on the cross; to the Gnostic, under the figure of the Next-Highest God, the Creator, descending to flesh and conquering the rebellious rulers of this aeon who held humanity in their leash, nailing the proclamation of his triumph and their defeat to the wood of the cross, and, embracing all believers within his effulgent pleroma, communicating to them his life and power, ascending to the throne on high, where his redeemed dwell with him; to the Greek *mystes* it is in a figure of sacramental union, conferring immortality and incorruption (*ἀθανασία, ἀφθαρσία*), dedicating him to a spiritual life, giving him wisdom and power. These are not distinct dogmas, but all aspects of one

truth, the truth of what Christ meant to St. Paul.

It is curious how St. Paul embodied tendencies destined to appear at large long after, and stated Christianity for the benefit of various points of view. It is curious, also, how later ages took *one* of St. Paul's symbols and let go the others—justification. This selection is chiefly due to Augustine and the West. It was a juridical figure appealing to the thinkers of an organization eminently juristic in character. It suited the thought of feudalists and canon-lawyers—it suited the whole genus for which "Rome" stood, and which uttered itself in Western theology. But there were always other men who went deeper. Mysticism never gave up the ghost. And these men, who voiced mysticism, were the salt of the earth in their generations. St. John, Clement, Dionysius, Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, Ruysbroeck, St. John of the Cross, Behmen—what a noble progeny, what a "chain of stars" (Dr. Bigg); men who, in their respective centuries, spread the leaven and scattered the fire which had come into Europe when a Cilician Jew, a Christian missionary, first crossed the Aegean with the message of Christ: Paul the Mystic.